



Group Corvair Comments

GROUP CORVAIR'S NEWSLETTER FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA



VOLUME XLVI, No. 2

February 2018



Group Corvair January Meeting
(Sardi's Polo A La Brasa, Bowie Town Center)

Now is the time for all good Group Corvair members to renew their membership!

\$12/year! Make out your check to Group Corvair and send it to Jim Simpson (Group Corvair Treasurer), 3845 Wayson Road, Davidsonville, MD 21035. If you are uncertain if you have already paid, call or drop me (Jim Simpson) an e-mail and I'll check.

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

February

20 – **Group Corvair Regular Meeting**, 7 p.m. Beijing of Greenbelt, 131 Centerway, Greenbelt, MD. Another chance to explore a Chinese menu. We normally order several dishes and share them.

March

10 – Chesapeake Region AACA Parts Swap Meet, Howard County Fairgrounds, 7 a.m. – 3 p.m.

20 – **Group Corvair Regular Meeting**, 7 p.m. Location is TBD.

23-24 – Sugarloaf Mountain Region AACA Swap Meet, Carroll County Agricultural Center, Westminster, MD.

April

17 – **Group Corvair Regular Meeting**, 7 p.m. Location is TBD.

18-22 – Spring Carlisle

May

15 – **Group Corvair Regular Meeting**, 7 p.m. Location is TBD

18-20 – Virginia Vair Fair, Winchester, VA. There is a group rate at the host hotel (Hampton Inn) but you have to reserve your room before April 20. For more information call Jeff Roadcap, 540-908-0010 or go to their web site at www.sites.google.com/site/centralvirginiacorvairclub/home.

18-20 – Corvair Museum Grand Opening, Chevrolet Hall of Fame, Decatur, IL. Host hotel: Hampton Inn, 4855 E. Evergreen Ct., Mt. Zion, IL 62521. Phone: 217-864-3297. Room rates are \$129/night using reservation code COR. There should be a welcoming party Friday night, car display on Saturday. The museum ribbon cutting is expected about noon on Saturday with possibly a banquet Saturday night.

20 – Corvair Ranch Open House. Car show, lunch, door prizes, etc.

June

2 – Orphan Car Tour through Harford and Baltimore counties in Maryland. Starts in Jarrettsville and ends at Friendly Farms Restaurant in Upperco with stops at points of interest along the way. See www.orphancartour.org for info.

19 – **Group Corvair Regular Meeting**, 7 p.m. Location is TBD

July

23-28 – CORSA International Convention, Pittsburgh, PA. See the *CORSA Communiqué* or www.CORSA.org for more information.

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Minutes of the January Meeting

Marolyn Simpson

On January 16 nine Group Corvair members held their first meeting of the new year at Sardi's Pollo A La Brasa in the Bowie Town Center. Club members met at 7:00 for dinner (mostly varieties of Peruvian chicken).

Barbara Torbert, vice president, called the business meeting to order at 8:25. The minutes from the brief December meeting were approved. Jim Simpson gave the treasurer's report. Income during the last month was from dues. (Dues for 2018 are now due. Make a check payable to Group Corvair for \$12 and send it to Jim Simpson, 3845 Wayson Road, Davidsonville, MD 21035.)

Jim S. had received an invitation to attend the post-show meeting on January 25 for the Rockville Antique and Classic Car Show which was last October. Since he had a conflict for that evening he was looking for another club member to attend to represent Group Corvair. Bob Hall and Rob Neighbour both offered to go.

The club received information on the Virginia Vair Fair which will be held in Winchester, VA on May 18 - 20 hosted by the Central Virginia Corvair Club. (The host hotel is the Hampton Inn Winchester North, 540/678-4000, \$96 special rate, mention Corvair Vair Fair before April 20.) Group Corvair will try to have a good representation at this year's event.

There was a short discussion on the feather flag design, but since Jerry Yates, the designer, was unable to attend the meeting this topic will be discussed at a later meeting.

There was also a brief discussion of the new management team at Corsa.

Under new business we had the election of officers. This is usually done at the December meeting but was not done during our holiday dinner. Officers are:

President, Bob Hall; Vice President, Barbara Torbert; Secretary, Marolyn Simpson; Treasurer, Jim Simpson.

The national convention will be in Pittsburgh, PA, July 23 - 28. Anyone going needs to get their hotel reservation in soon. You can make reservations by calling 888/222-8733 and using group code CCA, or by going online at www.corvairpittsburgh.com.

Phil Richardson gave a progress report on the restoration of his white 69 Corvair. He originally thought he would ask for a tech session to install the engine, but was able to complete the job himself.

The next meeting will be at the Beijing of Greenbelt restaurant, 131 Center Way Road, Greenbelt, MD. Dinner starts at 7:00 with the business meeting following at about 8:00.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00.

Forty, Thirty and Twenty Years Ago This Month

Jim Simpson

Showing how time keeps moving on, the February 1978 *Group Corvair Comments* reported on a joint tour with CORSA of Baltimore and Chesapeake Corvair of the Baltimore GM Assembly plant. The tour was great with about 50 members of the three clubs in attendance. But time keeps moving on; the Baltimore plant closed in 2005, Chesapeake Corvair has folded and the status of the Baltimore club is uncertain; they are still listed by CORSA but it's not clear if they still meet. (GM has since opened a new facility in White Marsh where they make electric motors and similar components for their electric cars such as the Spark, Bolt and Volt.) The newsletter also reported that *Automobile Quarterly* – the beautiful hardbound journal for the true automobile enthusiast – was preparing a special issue on the Corvair for issue in the spring of 1978. I hope you have your copy! The 'Vair Vender was a full two pages with just about anything you'd want. For instance, a '60 500 4-door, 29k miles for \$800, a '62 Monza wagon for \$1500, or a '69 500 that needs some body work (replacement fender) for \$300.

As appropriate to the season, the photo on the front of the February 1978 issue of the *CORSA Communiqués* was of an early model Corvair going down a road in Pennsylvania between what must have been 10' snow banks on either side. The CORSA president, Allen Martin, noted in his column that CORSA had over 6,000 members but was suffering from various internal stresses among the officers. There was little to report in the way of news or tech topics, but the Corvair Classifieds were well stocked. If you were planning to go to the '78 CORSA Convention in San Diego, one of the local members had at least 9 cars available for you to buy and drive home. How about a '63 Rampside with a 140 hp engine for \$1775?

Ten years later, the February 1988 issue of *Group Corvair Comments* reported on one of the periodic attempts to limit the work that car owners could do to their own cars to "minor tune-ups". In this case it was Fairfax County. As usual, it was an attempt to eliminate the derelict car problem. Also as usual, the proposal was overly broad to the point that it would essentially eliminate any "at home" automobile restoration work. Group Corvair made one of its periodic donations (\$500) to Children's Hospital. At the meeting, there was a short tech session at which Al Harris outlined rebuilding Rochester carburetors. He liked the Delco 9105 rebuild kits and used lacquer thinner as a cleaning solvent. The 'Vair Vender was short with three cars for sale. My choice would be the '65 Corsa for \$900; it needed paint though.

The February 1988 *CORSA Communiqué* was a tech-focused issue. The lead article was a biography of the chief designer of the Corvair engine, Al Kolbe. He was a life-long engine designer and had a hand in many well known engines of the 20th century including the Packard V-12, Chevy "small block" V-8 and the overhead cam four Opel

4-cylinder engines. Spence Shepard contributed a two page article discussing rebuilding engines; his major advice was to do it yourself. Even if you screw it up and have to do a second rebuild, the savings in labor would more than make up for the cost of parts and the experience itself would be invaluable. In case you don't have a radio in your Corvair and want to install one, you will need an antenna. The back page of the **Communiqué** had a template for cutting a hole in the correct location in the right front fender. (Just thought you'd like to know...) The CORSA Classifieds were shrinking; still a good selection, but fewer "interesting" cars.

Jumping ahead to 20 years ago, the February 1998 issue of *Group Corvair Comments* was lamenting the good weather for the annual club banquet. It had broken with the tradition of having the banquet on the worst day of the winter; there was no snow, ice, sleet and it was even moderately warm! There was also a commentary on a work in progress – a 5-speed transmission for the Corvair. This was based upon a modified version of the common T-5 transmission; a few were produced, but apparently the cost, complexity and required modifications to the car prevented more widespread use. John Moody contributed a lengthy article on carburetor icing. It included allusions to the "Miss America" figure and hair spray; I'll leave you to fill in the details... Of the five vehicles in the 'Vair Vendor, two were Rampsides, one a Spyder coupe and one a late 4-door with air conditioning.

The major article in the February 1998 issue of the *CORSA Communiqué* was a retrospective of Larry Shinoda, a designer who while best known for the iconic '63 Corvette Stingray coupe, also created many of the iconic Corvair-based concept and show cars including the Sebring Spyder coupe and roadster, the Monza GT, Monza SS and Astro 1. In his opinion, if GM had gone into production, the Corvair might well have survived. (GM president Ed Cole – yes the same Ed Cole who created the Corvair – killed the Monza GT because he felt it would erode Corvette sales.) This was followed by the tale of a pair of rather adventurous Corvair enthusiasts from New York who bought a '62 Spyder convertible out in San Diego and decided to drive it home. All they knew about the car at the time was that it "ran and drove". After picking the car up at a used car "boutique", their first decision was to put new tires on it – the tires on the car may well have been the originals. After that, it was head east with 2,886 miles to go. Other than a spark plug that decided to blow out of the head, a fuel pump that was loose, a steady oil leak, a snow storm in Ohio and a slipping clutch, they made it home in just over three days! The Corsa Classified was shrinking and down to a single page of cars for sale.

Did You Know That Group Corvair Does Tech Sessions?

Jim Simpson

Yes, we do. Just not very often anymore and pretty much upon request. Bob Hall needed some help with his Greenbrier van; it would start and run at moderately high speed but just refused to idle. When he started it, by the time he got back to the engine to see just what was going on, the engine would die. Very frustrating.



I volunteered to give him a hand with diagnosing, and if possible, fixing the problem. Marolyn and I loaded up our car with tools we might need and trundled over to his house. There the Greenbrier was parked by the curb looking a little sad and in need of attention. While Marolyn went into the Hall's house to visit with Carol, Bob and I took on the van.

Bob brought out a pair of fresh batteries to give plenty of cranking power. We dribbled a little gasoline into the carbs and Bob turned the key. The engine fired immediately! And then it died. We did this three or four times more with the same results. What did that tell us? Well, we certainly had ignition and that there was nothing fundamentally wrong

with the engine itself. Perhaps the carbs were just dry and we hadn't cranked the engine long enough. So we gave

that a try, but after what seemed like plenty of cranking, there still didn't seem to be any gasoline in the carbs. Operating the throttle didn't produce any gasoline "squirts" from the accelerator pumps.

Perhaps there was a blockage in the fuel line? (Bob was using a marine fuel tank to make sure there was fresh fuel and eliminate any issues with old gas in the van's tank.) Nope, that wasn't the problem. Perhaps a bad fuel pump? Luckily I had my spare fuel pump along so we swapped it in. That did the trick; the engine started and ran at high speed but before we could see if it would idle, Bob yelled for me to shut it down. My brand new, never used, never before installed on a car fuel pump was leaking like a sieve! I'm going to have to speak to a well known Corvair parts supplier about that.

So back to the original pump; I disassembled it and found that all the gaskets were fine with no cracks or other issues. But the internal check valves were stuck shut. I poked at them a little and they popped free and seemed to be fine. So I put it all back together and we reinstalled it. This time it pumped fuel just fine. Now that we could get the engine to run, albeit only at high speed, we could start taking a look at what might be the problem with idle speed.

A close inspection of linkages leads us to believe that the carburetor linkages were not as they should be. Unfortunately we were running out of time (and it was COLD out there) so we cut it short at that point. Bob is going to pull the carbs and go over all the settings and adjustments to be sure they're right. So this is a continuing story, but I have every confidence that in the very near future, Bob will be driving his Greenbrier to Group Corvair meetings.

The bottom line is that, yes, Group Corvair does tech sessions. Just let any of the club officers know if you need some help and we can set something up.

Tech Topics

Jim Simpson

Shock Absorber "Topper": The upper retaining nuts on the front shock absorbers are exposed to the elements. As you drive, road salts and moisture conspire to rust those nuts solid. Some replacement shocks come with rubber caps – "toppers" as I call them – to protect them from the elements. But not all new shock absorbers come with them. If you want to put covers on them, go to your favorite local auto parts store and look for ¾" size "Coolant Bypass Caps". These are intended to cap heater coolant lines if it is leaking or being removed for some reason. They are just the right size to slip over the nuts on the top of the shock absorbers.

I also use them on the rear shock absorbers, but this is more cosmetic. The rear shock absorber nuts are inside the engine compartment and not likely to rust. But these caps do dress things up a bit and I do get questions from people along the lines of "what do those knobs do?"

Removing Rust from Small Part?: There are numerous methods for removing rust from iron and steel parts. The most obvious is mechanical – wire brushes, abrasives, sand blasting, etc. But these tend to also take some of the good metal along with the rust. Then there are various acid baths; these work, but you also risk taking some of the good metal along with the bad. A third approach is to use reverse electrolysis to reverse the chemical process that created the rust in the first place. This does not remove any additional good metal but don't expect it to magically turn the rust back into good metal. Sorry, but once it's rusted, it's gone. (Note this only works on ferrous materials, not aluminum, brass or copper.)

Electrolysis uses safe chemicals (water and washing soda) along with a sacrificial iron or steel electrode and a low voltage power source (battery charger). When you are done, you don't have to worry about disposing of any hazardous materials.

You'll need a non-conductive container (plastic pan, used milk jug, plastic bucket, etc.) big enough to contain the part you want to de-rust. Along with that you need washing soda available at most grocery stores (this is Sodium Carbonate, **not** baking soda which is Sodium Bicarbonate), a battery charger – 10 amp rated is recommended although lower powered ones work, just more slowly, a sacrificial anode (just a piece of scrap iron or steel (not stainless steel)), and miscellaneous items such as wire, tape, blocks to hold things up, etc.

Dissolve ¼ cup of washing soda in two gallons of water. Place the item to be de-rusted in the plastic container and connect the **Negative** (-) lead of the battery charger to it. This is important: If you reverse the leads the item

being cleaned will instead become the sacrificial anode and gradually dissolve! (You may want to use short pieces of copper wire to make the connections so your battery charger connectors aren't dipped in the solution.)

Connect the Positive (+) lead of the battery charger to the sacrificial anode – a piece of scrap iron. This could be a piece sheet metal, iron wire, whatever. Just be sure that a) it isn't stainless steel, b) is not galvanized, c) isn't covered with oil and d) isn't painted or otherwise insulated. Ideally it will have a fairly large surface area, somewhat comparable to the item being cleaned but this isn't particularly important. Make sure the sacrificial anode is NOT touching the item being cleaned – use a scrap piece of wood or something similarly non-conductive to hold them apart if needed.

Pour in the washing soda solution being sure to cover the parts. Turn on the battery charger. Check back every few hours to see how things are progressing. You may have to clean the sacrificial anode periodically, just turn off the power and rub it down with some steel wool. Note that the sacrificial anode is disappearing – it is being sacrificed! You may need to add some more washing soda solution as well.

The part being de-rusted will gradually acquire a black film; this is normal. When you are satisfied that all the rust is gone, remove the part, wash it off with clean soap and water and dry it. Note that you now have a bare piece of iron and it will start to rust again almost immediately! Coat it with something to protect it – paint if you are going to paint it or something like WD-40 if it is going to remain bare metal.

There's nothing hazardous in the left over washing soda solution – just water, washing soda and iron oxides – so it should be perfectly ok to dump down a drain or out in the back yard. (*Adapted from an article by Mark Welte in the Mid Continent Corvair Association Newsletter, Feb 2018*)

Vair Vendor

For Sale: Convertible Rear Window replacement. This is the Clark's Corvair Parts replacement late model convertible top rear window – black with zipper. It seems to be in excellent condition with the window very pliable. Clark's currently wants \$127.85 for theirs. Please make me an offer! Jim Simpson, simpsonj@verizon.net, 240-232-2820.

For Sale: 1965 Corvair Corsa Coupe, 140 hp, 4-speed. Yellow with black interior. This car belonged to a former Group Corvair member and has been parked in a dry garage for about the last 27 years. It was running when parked; the odometer indicates 63,779 miles on the car. There is paperwork that indicates that the engine was replaced at one time with a "RM" code (Monza/500) 140 hp manual transmission engine. The engine can be turned by hand. The interior is in generally decent condition although the side of the driver's seat has been patched with tape. The body has some rust in the usual places but it is not excessive; the floors and trunk seem to be in good condition.



There has been some sheet metal damage that appears to be relatively easy to straighten out.

The car will need a brake overhaul, tires and a cleaning of the fuel system in order to make it run. Overall this Corsa appears to be a sound basis for a restoration. Asking \$2,100. Please contact the owner at ldgray1@yahoo.com for more information.

For nearly a decade Chevrolet has built rear-engine fun cars. In that time, Corvair has established itself as a firm favorite with U.S. enthusiasts. Reasons: rear-engine design with great roadability. Independent suspension at all four wheels (like the famous Corvette) for supple ride. With the engine weight in the rear, over the driving wheels, traction is superb. (Just ask owners who live in winter climates!) But with all these virtues, why the low price? Chevrolet know-how, that's why.



Shown on front cover: Monza Sport Coupe. Shown above: Monza Convertible. Copyright 1967, Chevrolet Motor Division, General Motors Corporation.



Group Corvair welcomes anyone in the Washington, DC area who has an interest in the Chevrolet Corvair. We sponsor a variety of events including shows, tech sessions, and social gatherings. Dues are \$12.00 a year, payable to Group Corvair and sent to the treasurer's address. Group Corvair is a chapter of the Corvair Society of America (CORSA), P.O. Box 607, Lemont, IL 60439-0607, website: www.corvair.org CORSA memberships are available at various levels with corresponding dues. As a member, you will receive the award-winning CORSA Communiqué and be eligible to attend all CORSA national events, including the annual convention.

These are "QRC" links to the CORSA web site. Clip them out and post them where people with smart phones can image them and connect to CORSA.

